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UNCLAS YEREVAN 002105

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL PHUM AM](#)

SUBJECT: GOAM DETAINING, HARASSING OPPOSITION IN  
DISQUIETING MOVES

REF: A) YEREVAN 2075 B) YEREVAN 2081 C) YEREVAN 2083

D) DOELL/WITMER 12/2 E-MAIL

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POLICE DETAINING OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS  
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1. (SBU) In the wake of a marred constitutional referendum and modest opposition rallies protesting the electoral fraud (reftels), over the past week the GOAM has opted to detain at least 50 opposition supporters for several hours at a time, with a number of the detainees credibly alleging that the police beat them while they were in custody. While the opposition clearly does not currently command widespread popular support, continued GOAM overreaction could easily change that.

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ANEMIC RALLY FOLLOWED BY POLICE OVERKILL  
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2. (SBU) Although an unsanctioned opposition rally December 2 attracted no more than 1700 supporters, within 30 minutes of the close of the rally (mostly plainclothes) police had rounded up approximately 35 opposition supporters and taken them to various Yerevan police districts for 2-4 hours of questions. We have well-documented, detailed information on roughly half of the detentions the opposition is citing, including one supporter who had been detained on five separate occasions.

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COMMENT: CLEARLY THE WRONG DIRECTION  
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3. (SBU) The GOAM is clearly too insecure to simply ignore the lackluster, poorly attended opposition protests, and is reacting in a decidedly ham-handed manner. That having been said, the scope of the detentions is still relatively limited, especially when compared to GOAM overreaction to opposition protests in 2004. We are watching these disquieting developments closely and continue to push the GOAM to moderate its excessive anti-oppositionist zeal.  
EVANS